United Nations E/CN.5/2017/8

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 November 2016

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Fifty-fifth session
1-10 February 2017
Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Programme questions and other matters: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-fifth session the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the work of the Institute during 2015 and 2016.

* E/CN.5/2016/L.1.

16-20529 (E) 021216

Please recycle

Report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the work of the Institute during 2015 and 2016

Summary

The present report covers the activities of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in 2015 and 2016. It highlights the programmatic achievements during this period, and presents the institutional and financial situation.

The biennium was marked by opportunities and transitions for the Institute: the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which presented the Institute with important opportunities to demonstrate the relevance of its research; the appointment of a new director; and the initiation of work within a new strategic framework. Transformations to Equity and Sustainability: UNRISD Strategy 2016-2020 links research, communications, policy engagement, results and impact, and was developed through extensive consultations with actual and potential users of research of the Institute in the United Nations system, Member States, civil society and academia.

The biennium also brought significant challenges: a changed funding context for research and the need for reforms to strengthen the Institute's oversight and governance.

In this period of change, the Institute continued to carry out and to convene research under its three thematic areas of expertise: social policy and development; gender and development; and social dimensions of sustainable development. It published Policy Innovations for Transformative Change: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 2016 flagship report, as a contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In those ways the work of the Institute addressed system-wide development priorities related to poverty reduction, inequality, social protection, the empowerment of women and social drivers of sustainability.

The Institute's research contributed directly to the work of the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council on the above themes. Research findings of the Institute were also widely used by United Nations agencies, Member States, civil society and academia. Researchers regularly advise or provide briefings or presentations to these stakeholders, sharing knowledge, framing debates and influencing thinking and policy alternatives on development issues.

During the reporting period, the Institute continued to innovate its communications and outreach activities, and to strengthen institutional processes related to results-based management and impact.

At the beginning of 2016, the Institute's financial position reached a crisis point, with financial reserves depleted and operations threatened. As a result of discussions and negotiation with Institute's principal Government partners and the United Nations system, emergency funds were mobilized to stabilize the Institute. Considerable efforts will be required in the near future to diversify core funding and increase project funding.

The Institute is funded entirely through voluntary contributions, and depends on the support of Member States to ensure the fulfilment of its core mandate and functions of support to the United Nations system and to Member States. The Institute is grateful to its funders, particularly those providing institutional support — Finland, Sweden and Switzerland — without which none of the Institute's activities could take place.

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction: transitions, opportunities and challenges	4
II.	Strategic framework	5
III.	2016 flagship report	6
IV.	Research agenda: transformations to equity and sustainability	6
	A. Social policy and development	7
	B. Gender and development	10
	C. Social dimensions of sustainable development	13
V.	Communications and outreach	16
VI.	Institutional issues	16
	A. Management and staffing	17
	B. Governance and Board	18
	C. Financial report	18

I. Introduction: transitions, opportunities and challenges

1. The present report covers the activities of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in 2015 and 2016. It is submitted to the Commission for Social Development in accordance with the terms set out in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/126 of 1 August 1963, in which it is stipulated that the Board of the Institute should, inter alia, submit regularly to the Commission "a progress report on the work of the Institute".

2. The Institute was established in 1963 as an autonomous space within the United Nations system with the mandate to undertake policy-relevant research on the social dimensions of development. For more than five decades the Institute has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure that social issues remain prominent within the development activities of the United Nations. The Institute is the only institution in the United Nations system that is dedicated to research on social issues that are often neglected in development policy and practice.

3. The Institute uses its global convening power as a United Nations organization with a reputation for research excellence to leverage an international network of academics, policymakers and practitioners, thus bringing a diverse knowledge base and plurality of ideas to inform the work of the United Nations system on social issues.

4. The biennium was marked by opportunities and transitions for the Institute: the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which presents important opportunities to demonstrate the relevance of Institute research; the appointment of a new director; and the initiation of work under a new institutional strategy. The biennium also brought significant challenges: a changed funding context for research and the need for reforms to strengthen the Institute's oversight and governance.

5. The strategic framework for 2016-2020, which links research, communications, policy engagement, results and impact, was developed through extensive consultations with actual and potential users of research of the Institute and approved by the Institute's Board. A work plan is prepared annually, taking into consideration priority concerns and themes of the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development.

6. During the biennium, the Institute produced its fifth flagship report, Policy Innovations for Transformative Change: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1] which is a contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7. The Institute is funded entirely through voluntary contributions and its work is governed by an independent Board. These conditions provide it with the autonomy needed to produce high-quality independent research. However, the funding context for the Institute has shifted significantly in recent years, as many donors have moved away from voluntary institutional funding. At the beginning of 2016, the Institute's financial position reached a crisis point, with reserves depleted and operations threatened.

[1] Available at www.unrisd.org/flagship2016.

8. As a result of discussions and negotiation with principal Government partners and the United Nations system, emergency funds were mobilized to stabilize the Institute. Considerable efforts will be needed in the near future to diversify core funding and increase the proportion of funding coming from projects. The Institute depends on the financial support of Member States to ensure delivery of its core mandate and functions of support to the United Nations system and Member States.

II. Strategic framework

9. The Institute began the implementation of work under Transformations to equity and sustainability: UNRISD strategy 2016-2020[2] during the biennium.

10. The strategy sets out the priorities and the themes of research of the Institute within an institutional framework that links research, communications, policy engagement, results and impact. It was developed through extensive consultations with actual and potential users of research of the Institute in the United Nations system, Member States, civil society and academia. It responds to contemporary development trends, policy concerns and scholarly debates, and aims to fill identified knowledge gaps, while also anticipating social issues that are not yet part of mainstream discourse.

11. Under the strategy, the Institute is carrying out research that will help national Governments and others achieve their sustainable development objectives. An overarching goal of the Institute is to ensure that social development concerns and objectives remain prominent in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

12. Research is organized in three programme areas: social policy and development, gender and development and social dimensions of sustainable development. Each programme identifies key questions and topics for research that will contribute to addressing the contemporary challenges of inequalities, conflict and unsustainable practices. In so doing, they aim to contribute evidence that supports efforts at local, national, regional and global levels to progress along sustainable and equitable development pathways.

13. Work within each programme is realized as a collaborative endeavour with global networks of researchers, policymakers and civil society actors that the Institute has built up over decades.

14. The strategic framework also includes information on research approach, methods and data, and a results framework with objectives, activities and outputs. The budgetary and financial requirements for implementing the strategy are discussed, as is the fact that the Institute receives no funding from the general budget of the United Nations and must fully mobilize all the financial resources necessary to implement the strategy.

[2] www.unrisd.org/unrisd-strategy-2016-2020.

III. 2016 flagship report

15. Twenty years after the World Summit for Social Development, and as countries begin to translate the vision of the 2030 Agenda into national strategies, development actors need concrete evidence of which policies and actions contribute to greater equity, inclusion and sustainability. The Institute's 2016 flagship report, *Policy Innovations for Transformative Change: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, explores what it will take to fulfil the 2030 Agenda vision of "transforming our world" and eradicating poverty in all its forms everywhere.

16. The report argues that social and ecological justice needs to be prioritized in policy and practice, and that the economy be made to work for people and the planet. That is founded on a wide range of case studies that show that integrated and coherent policymaking with an "eco-social" focus can create more inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies.

17. Drawing on numerous policy innovations from countries around the world, the report proposes a definition of transformation that can be used as a benchmark for policymaking and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It brings together five years of research of the Institute across six areas — social policy, care policy, social and solidarity economy, eco-social policy, domestic resource mobilization and politics and governance — and explores what transformative change really means for societies and individuals. The report examines the evidence of what is working and why in specific contexts, considers challenges and how they can be overcome and identifies spaces of synergy and coherence among policies that are likely to contribute positively to multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

18. As a learning organization that aims to be inclusive of diverse perspectives and responsive to its constituents, the Institute held an innovative global online consultation prior to the publication of the report. The Institute received feedback from civil society, academia, national governments, United Nations partners and other international organizations located in 28 countries.

19. The report was previewed at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2016 and officially launched on 17 October in Geneva at a public event and an executive briefing hosted by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Institute welcomes opportunities to partner with Member States in the organization of presentations around the world.

IV. Research agenda: transformations to equity and sustainability

20. There was a significant change in the international development landscape in the biennium, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development succeeding the Millennium Development Goals. The new global commitments contain ambitious promises of solidarity and transformation, combining a continued focus on the most disadvantaged people in low-income countries with universal goals of greater equity and sustainability — social, ecological and economic.

21. With the development community now clearly focused on social issues, determined to combat inequalities, and oriented towards more balanced and integrated approaches to tackle development problems, there is a context of

opportunity for the Institute. The Institute's mission is to carry out research and policy analysis to ensure that social equity, inclusion and justice are central to development thinking, policy and practice.

22. In carrying out its work programme, the Institute pursued substantive collaboration with research networks in the Global South, engaging with researchers and institutions in ways that contributed to capacity-building: by convening interdisciplinary networks and engaging in two-way dialogue with partners to design, implement and deliver research projects, ensuring genuine co-production of knowledge and mutual learning.

A. Social policy and development

23. The social policy and development programme comprised projects of immediate relevance to the current policy context: the universalization of social security in emerging economies; innovations in the field of social policy in countries of the Global South; the politics and the processes that shape domestic resource mobilization and fiscal space for social development; the linkages between social protection and human rights; and the challenges of overcoming migrant precarity and of grounding migration governance in a rights-based approach.

24. Social policy of the Institute was the basis for regular engagement with policymakers, and for training and capacity strengthening activities. In 2015 and 2016, the Institute contributed to the course "Social policy for development planners", hosted by the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, for mid- and senior-level civil servants from government ministries across Africa. Seminars were also given to activists and trade unionists from Latin America working for national social protection floors in their countries

1. Politics of domestic resource mobilization for social development

25. Expanding (and maintaining) social policies requires resources. In a constrained fiscal environment, what are the possibilities for ensuring that revenues can be raised and allocated to social expenditures? That is a critical question in the context of discussions on financing for development and the 2030 Agenda. With funding from Sweden since 2012, the project studies the political and institutional factors that determine how domestic resources can be mobilized in low- and lower middle-income countries, what determines whether these are allocated in ways that advance social development and how national processes can be supported at regional and global levels.

26. Research by country teams in Bolivia, Nicaragua, Uganda and Zimbabwe explores the connections between the politics of resource mobilization and demands for social provision. It examines processes of negotiation about who pays and who benefits, as well as governance and institutional reforms that can lead to sustainable revenue yields and better service provision. Cross-country and cross-regional studies complement the four in-depth case studies; other papers examine different financing instruments and types of resources, such as taxes, aid and mineral rents.

27. The project aims to contribute to global debates about how to bridge the funding gaps for meeting key global development targets and social programmes;

enhance national ownership and policy space; and enhance effective accountability of Governments to citizens.

28. The research highlights some promising routes towards mobilizing more and better social development finance, and suggests a range of key issues to be addressed to support the 2030 Agenda. It emphasizes the importance of inclusive and transparent reform processes, diversification of the financing mix with an emphasis on instruments that promote sustainable development and equity and governance reforms at all levels.

29. A wide range of project outputs were produced during the biennium and are available on the website of the Institute, including country case studies and thematic papers, videos and project briefs.

30. The research has informed global debates on financing for development and, in particular, financing social protection floors. It has been used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development country offices in Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

31. Research from a related project, Mobilizing revenue from extractive industries: protecting and promoting children's rights and well-being in resource-rich countries, carried out in Mongolia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, was finalized during the biennium. It has informed the programmatic and operational work of UNICEF, and contributed to the annual meetings of the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Metals and Sustainable Development and to Mongolia's national mainstreaming and planning efforts.

2. New directions in social policy: alternatives from and for the global South

32. The project, which began in 2014 with funding from Sweden, examines the emergence, the nature and the effectiveness of recent innovations in social policy in the Global South.

33. The research explores how economic, social, political and institutional arrangements can be designed to achieve better social outcomes; how the values and norms of human rights, equity, sustainability and social justice can be operationalized through "new" social policies; and how experiences, knowledge and learning about innovative approaches can be shared among countries in the Global South. The evidence and the analysis generated by the project will help improve understanding of alternative policies for social development in the context of the 2030 Agenda and beyond.

34. Country case studies are being carried out with teams of local and international researchers in China, India, Indonesia, Russia and South Africa; Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia are being studied by two teams; and country overviews are being prepared on Brazil and Rwanda. Thematic papers on institutional issues, informal employment and transnational and global approaches to social policy complete the commissioned research.

35. The project expands research carried out on the theme "Towards universal social security in emerging economies" (2012-2015, with funding from Brazil) that

examined recent reforms in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, China, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Thailand. The project explored the diverse pathways to extending programmes for income and health security, with the goal of understanding the political, the social, the economic and the institutional arrangements that enhance availability, affordability and accessibility. The project was concluded during the current biennium. The full set of working papers is available at www.unrisd.org, and the final volume will be published in January 2017.

36. This body of research has informed Institute contributions to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia High-level Workshop on the Future of Development Policy in the Arab Region; the thirteenth Meeting of the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries and the Ministry of Social Solidarity (Timor Leste); and several Expert Group meetings of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. The research was also presented to experts and civil society leaders from North African countries at the World Social Forum (Tunisia).

3. Linking social protection and human rights

37. This activity, initiated in 2013 by the Institute in collaboration with the former Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and funded in 2015 and 2016 by Finland, aims to improve understanding of the human rights-based approach to social protection and provide resources that can support the development of capacities to implement rights-based social protection systems. It is a web-based platform (social protection-humanrights.org) that provides policymakers and practitioners with a growing collection of resources: a framework of fundamental principles and relevant instruments, examples of jurisprudence, and a space for engagement around experiences, best practices and innovative solutions.

38. During the biennium eight new partners joined the Institute, the Social Protection Department of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in this activity: the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and UNICEF.

39. The Institute organized eight events in Geneva and took part in numerous outside activities to raise awareness of the human rights-based approach and promote the platform. Side events were held in conjunction with six sessions of the Human Rights Council, and briefings were provided to social protection practitioners from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

4. Beyond "management of migration" to a human rights-based approach

40. As a "non-university partner" of a World Universities Network project on migrant precarity, the Institute was able to build on previous research on the themes "Social policy and migration in developing countries" and "Regional governance of migration".

41. The project investigated the linkages between migration and social protection from a rights perspective in the context of intra-regional migration in Europe, the Americas and Asia, for three key groups of migrants (unaccompanied children, refugees and labour migrants). The research aimed to identify inclusive policies and institutions that reduce the precarity and strengthen the human rights of migrants in both sending and receiving countries.

42. The Institute's research, convening power and communications capacity positioned it as a valuable project partner. The Institute hosted the final project workshop to discuss research findings with representatives of international organizations, civil society organizations and academics, and produced a video, a policy brief and three working papers to communicate the research findings.

5. Future directions

43. Under the Institute strategy 2016-2020, and guided by the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the social policy and development programme will continue to examine questions of sustainable and progressive financing for development, and of innovative social policies in the Global South. It will pay particular attention to the politics of social policy change. It will also explore how social policy is being, or could be, harnessed at regional and global levels to deal with issues that cross borders, such as migration and environmental or conflict-induced displacement; and how social policy interfaces with economic and environmental policy to address complex intersections between policy domains.

44. In October 2016, the Institute was commissioned by the National Center for Social Studies (Saudi Arabia) to carry out a study on the theme "Lessons from successful experiences with welfare, rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners". A new project, titled "Valueworks: effects of financialization along the copper value chain", was granted funding by the Swiss Network for International Studies and will commence in January 2017. This research on China, Switzerland and Zambia will have direct results for policy interventions relating to transparency in the commodity sector, transnational policy coherence and sustainable development.

45. At the end of the biennium, three project proposals were under consideration by donors: "Social policy for the integration of displaced persons in East Africa"; "Promoting the human security approach in livelihoods initiatives for refugee integration"; and "Global social governance and migrant precarity: the right to decent work". Further project ideas were under consultation with partners.

B. Gender and development

46. Gender inequality, discrimination and violence affect all countries around the world and are major obstacles to equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. Despite progress, the problems are pervasive and in many contexts reversals in previous gains are occurring. For these reasons, the gender and development programme focuses on the structures and the relations that underpin gendered outcomes, including the linkages between production and social reproduction, between economic and social policies and between women's movements and State institutions.

47. This work positions the Institute as a strong, innovative and recognized voice on gender and social development within (and beyond) the United Nations system. The relevance of the Institute's pioneering research on the care economy, for example, was demonstrated by the inclusion of unpaid care work in the Sustainable Development Goals.

48. Highlights of the biennium included collaboration with Oxfam to produce a special issue of the journal *Gender & Development* on the Sustainable Development Goals. A Think Piece series, "Let's talk about women's rights: 20 years after the Beijing Platform for Action", convened leading feminist thinkers from around the world to discuss achievements, challenges and ways forward on women's rights and gender equality. A workshop, "Substantive equality for women", organized with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, aimed to strengthen the links between human rights and public policy to fully realize women's human rights and substantive gender equality. The Institute's expertise on unpaid care work was the basis for policy briefings at the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-American Development Bank, and for Government ministers from Uruguay and Costa Rica.

1. Understanding gender-egalitarian policy change

49. Undertaken from 2013 to 2016 with support from the Ford Foundation, this project brought together international and national-level researchers to understand how policy change to strengthen women's rights occurs, and to identify the factors and the conditions under which non-State actors, particularly advocates of gender equality, can be effective in triggering and influencing policy change and effective implementation.

50. The project focused on violence against women, and domestic workers' labour rights, in China, India and Indonesia. It also considered women's land and inheritance rights, and unpaid care work.

51. With the Sustainable Development Goals, Member States have committed to eliminating violence against women and are seeking ways to achieve this. Domestic workers' labour rights, on the other hand, are still a relatively neglected national-level policy issue. The research identified some of the drivers of successful advocacy and mobilization on both of these issues in the countries studied, as well as hurdles. The findings should help policymakers, women's rights advocates and funders to effectively strategize, mobilize and support progressive change.

52. The research shows that women's mobilization is essential for gender-egalitarian policy change, but policy change is often slow and incremental. Successful mobilization entails a number of elements, including national democratic space, "gender champions" who complement the efforts of women's movements, and women's "machineries" that build bridges between women's organizations and State actors. Transnational actors, as well as international normative frameworks, can support country-level mobilization for change.

53. With the research findings, the Institute has contributed to the work of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the

Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the ILO fourth conference on regulating for decent work. At the country level, the research teams engaged with women's rights activists as beneficiaries of the research findings. A wide range of project outputs were produced during the biennium and are available on the Institute website, including the country case studies and thematic papers, videos and policy briefs. A synthesis paper was published in the journal *Gender & Development* in 2016, and a special section of the journal, *Development and Change*, is forthcoming.

2. Feminization, agricultural transition and rural employment

54. Employment remains the main route to economic empowerment, but women remain disadvantaged both in access to jobs and in the terms of their employment. Many developing countries have expanded their agricultural export sectors beyond traditional crops, often creating new forms of employment for women. The terms under which women are integrated into such agricultural supply chains, and the implications for the well-being of themselves and their families, are however poorly understood.

55. During the biennium, the Institute collaborated with the University of Bern (Switzerland) and partners in Bolivia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and Rwanda to undertake research on the feminization of non-traditional agriculture and the impacts on women of the commercialization of agriculture for export. Funded by the Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development, this six-year project began in 2014.

56. The Institute contributed to a range of activities, including cross-country comparative analysis and support to the country-based research teams to strengthen their capacity to undertake gender analysis. Training sessions were organized during project workshops in Rwanda (2015) and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (2016) to co-design quantitative and qualitative methods appropriate for the cross-country comparative research.

3. Feminist analysis of social and solidarity economic practices: views from Latin America and India

57. The Institute is a partner in this project, which was initiated in December 2015 with funding from the Swiss Network for International Studies and is led by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva.

58. Social and solidarity economic activities can be found in almost all sectors of the economy and are receiving growing attention from scholars and public authorities. However, this interest remains for the most part gender-blind, even though women play a major role in social and solidarity economic activities.

59. While social and solidarity economy can contribute to sustainable development by providing innovative forms of production, consumption, exchange and financing, it can only be truly transformative if it also addresses the reorganization of social reproduction and integrates the political goals of gender equality and more equitable power relations. The research thus aims to fill some of the gaps in social and solidarity economic analysis and policies from a feminist perspective.

60. The Institute's role in this collaborative project is the comparative analysis of the data produced by the country research teams in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and

India, and the production and dissemination of policy-focused outputs, such as briefs, that aim to communicate the research to an interdisciplinary audience.

4. Future directions

61. Under the Institute strategy 2016-2020, the Institute's work on gender and development will continue to explore the structures and the relations that underpin gendered outcomes, examining the root causes of gender discrimination and inequality, rather than merely the symptoms. The focus on the intersectionality of gender with factors such as age, class and ethnicity will be maintained. In consultation with partners, and depending on the staffing structure for this programme, new research will be developed under the strategic areas of inequalities, conflict and unsustainable practices, with clear connections to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

C. Social dimensions of sustainable development

62. The year 2015 was a milestone for sustainable development. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda marked a new beginning in terms of both process and potential outcomes.

63. The Institute consolidated its programme of work on social dimensions of sustainable development during the biennium, in order to position the Institute as a credible, innovative voice on these issues within and beyond the United Nations system. This has built on past work on integrated and sustainable development, a selection of which was brought together and published in 2015 as *Revisiting Sustainable Development* (UNRISD Classics Volume III), as well as on recent and new work on social and environmental policy linkages and on policy integration and coherence. The Institute took up opportunities to ensure that its research informed the processes and people shaping the 2030 Agenda, and its first year of implementation, including through contribution to key documents and participation in expert groups and other meetings throughout the biennium.

1. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

64. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development resonates strongly with both the substance and the ethos of the Institute's research. This is demonstrated in a comprehensive way in the Institute's 2016 flagship report (see para. 15). A brief, titled "The Sustainable Development Agenda: From Inspiration to Action", was published by the Institute for the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Summit.

65. On numerous occasions during the biennium the Institute contributed expertise, analysis and evidence to national-level and United Nations processes around the new global framework. Selected activities included:

(a) Technical assistance to the Republic of Korea in the development of its National Voluntary Review, which was presented at the 2016 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development;

(b) Expertise to a number of activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, including the Expert Group meetings on the themes "Social

development and Agenda 2030" and "Strengthening social development in the contemporary world", which provided inputs for the report of the Secretary-General on the Commission's priority theme for 2015-2016, and the 2015 edition of the Global Sustainable Development Report.

(c) Policy recommendations for the Economic and Social Council Integration Segment entitled "Employment and decent work for achieving sustainable development"; and for the report of the Secretary-General "Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals: What will it take?". The Institute input emphasized that reducing inequality must be recognized as a guiding principle for the post-2015 agenda;

(d) The "Road to Addis and Beyond" series of blogs and think pieces, which discussed prospects and alternatives for sustainable development financing, as a contribution to the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

2. Social and solidarity economy

66. Socially sustainable development requires rethinking the relationship between the organization of the economy and social and sustainability outcomes. Multiple global crises, together with the impetus of the 2030 Agenda, have reignited a search for alternative ways of organizing consumption, production and distribution.

67. Social and solidarity economy refers to forms of production and exchange that aim to satisfy human needs and enhance well-being, build resilience and contribute to sustainability through organizations and relations based on cooperation, association and solidarity.

68. In the period 2015-2016, the Institute continued work initiated in 2013 to understand the potential and the limits of social and solidarity economy in contributing to sustainable development objectives. A new phase of research was designed, with a focus on social and solidarity economy as a means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; measuring the socioeconomic impact of social and solidarity economy; and scaling up social and solidarity economy through enabling conditions. In addition to this project development work, the Institute published *Social and solidarity economy: beyond the fringe?*; organized a research workshop on the theme "Social and solidarity finance"; and participated actively in efforts of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy and others to raise awareness of social and solidarity economy.

69. A highlight in terms of policy engagement and impact took place on the sidelines of the 2015 Sustainable Development Summit, when the Institute represented the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy at a high-level event of the Leading Group on Social and Solidarity Economy. At that meeting, which was organized by France, members of the Leading Group endorsed a draft declaration calling for social and solidarity economy to be considered an integral part of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

70. In December 2015, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) commissioned the Institute to carry out work in support of their strategic objective of reducing rural poverty, by preparing a background note on enabling public policies for social and solidarity economy as a means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and a brief on methods to

assess, analyse and measure social and solidarity economy. This work also informs the strategic direction of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy.

3. Social and environmental policy linkages

71. Sustainable development entails prosperity and human well-being within the ecological limits of the planet. This suggests a coexistence of social, environmental and economic development objectives, where there will be trade-offs that must be negotiated. In practice, economic interests often predominate, and the environmental and social pillars are sidelined.

72. There is a growing body of research and policy work on the social dimensions of environmental impacts and climate change. There is less attention to policy approaches that aim to foster the transformation to sustainability by positioning social and environmental priorities above economic ones.

73. In 2015 and 2016, the Institute undertook in-house research, building on previous work on the theme "Social dimensions of green economy", to explore the linkages between environmental and social — or "eco-social" — policies and to identify policy innovations that harness synergies and lead to more inclusive and balanced approaches to sustainable development. The work fed into the Institute's 2016 flagship report (see para. 15) and into the development of a research portfolio that aims to explore the social implications of climate change and sustainability in two key areas: the transition to renewable energies, and climate change adaptation. Several project proposals were developed during the biennium and submitted for funding, including "Enhancing knowledge and capacities for inclusive transitions to renewable energy systems in Asia"; and "Promoting the human security approach for inclusive adaptation to climate change in coastal cities".

4. Future directions

74. Under the Institute strategy 2016-2020, and in the context of the 2030 Agenda, the Social Dimensions of the Sustainable Development Programme will maintain its focus on the intersectionality of social and environmental issues and policies at global, national and local levels. The programme will explore how countries implement innovative eco-social policies that combine environmental and social objectives. It will consider the transformative potential of local practices, including social and solidarity economy and other innovative approaches in urban contexts, their role in supporting a socially inclusive and environmentally sound economic system, and the possibilities for transferring lessons and scaling up. Consultation and fundraising are under way for new projects on the themes "Understanding renewable energy expansion in Central Asia"; "Adapting to climate change: the decision-making process in coastal cities"; "Institutionalizing social and solidarity economy: a comparative international perspective"; "Social and solidarity economy, urban communities and the protection of vulnerable groups in times of crisis"; and "Implementing sustainability through social economy: the case of Seoul".

V. Communications and outreach

75. The mandate of the Institute requires that its research be policy-relevant and engage with pressing issues of concern to the United Nations system and Member States. The Institute aims to ensure that its research reaches a broad range of actors concerned with different facets of social development, and that its findings inform intergovernmental and national policy processes, civil society advocacy and scholarly debates. During the biennium, the Institute pursued a range of innovative and traditional communications and outreach activities to make its research available, accessible and relevant to key stakeholders, to increase its reach and visibility in the global community, and to foster engagement and interaction with audiences. These are reflected in sections II, III and IV of the present report.

76. During the reporting period, the Institute also:

(a) Produced a high number of outputs, including 38 research papers; 15 policy and other briefs; 7 books/reports; and 69 blogs and think pieces;[3]

(b) Used digital communication tools to engage with a wide audience, growing its social media following to nearly 40,000, and producing 53 videos and 28 podcasts;

(c) Fostered face-to-face engagement and dialogue among stakeholders through 36 events organized or co-organized with United Nations, Member State, academic and civil society partners;

(d) Produced 10 issues of an e-bulletin to share research findings and other information with a wide audience (Nos. 22-31, available at www.unrisd.org).

77. An important channel for influence of research of the Institute is the engagement of research staff in advisory and consultative activities for Government and United Nations officials, participation in expert meetings, task force groups and similar activities, and providing verbal or written inputs as required. The Institute staff carried out over 150 advisory and consultative activities in 2015 and 2016.

VI. Institutional issues

78. The Institute receives no funding from the budget of the United Nations and is therefore reliant on the resources it receives from primarily Governments and foundations. The funding context for the Institute has shifted significantly in the last decade, as donors have moved away from institutional funding towards project funding through competitive processes.

79. This shift has helped orient the providers of research towards the demands of funders, and the Institute has welcomed the incentives this has created. At the same time, the Institute's unique characteristics have made it difficult for the Institute to replace declining core funding with that allocated solely for projects. These characteristics include a long-term horizon, insistence on working with and

[3] A list of selected Institute publications produced in 2015-2016 is available at http://www.unrisd.org/csocd-publications-2015-2016.

strengthening the capacities of researchers of the South, a critical approach and the Institute's position within the architecture of the United Nations.

80. At the beginning of 2016, the Institute's financial position reached a crisis point, with financial reserves depleted and operations threatened. In February 2016, the Director of the Institute wrote to key stakeholders to inform them that without a change in the volume and type of support received by the Institute, operations would cease at the end of May 2016.

81. A seven-month period of engagement with stakeholders raised awareness of the Institute's situation and sought to garner the moral, the political and the financial support necessary to ensure that the Institute could continue its work and eventually reconsolidate on stable foundations.

82. The Institute received strong support from key Member States — Sweden, Switzerland and Finland — departments of the United Nations Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in particular. As a result of discussions and negotiation with the Institute's principal Government partners and the United Nations system, emergency funds were mobilized to stabilize the Institute. Considerable efforts will be needed in the near future to diversify core funding and increase the proportion of funding coming from projects.

83. On 7 November 2016, the Institute convened a stakeholder meeting with representatives of key bilateral donors and partners, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and Secretariat departments to discuss the Institute's institutional strategy, financing and governance.

A. Management and staffing

84. On 1 June 2015 the director of the Institute, Sarah Cook, stepped down after leading the Institute for five and a half years. On 23 July 2015, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Paul Ladd of the United Kingdom as director of the Institute. Mr. Ladd took up his functions on 11 October 2015. The position had been advertised through the United Nations recruitment platform, Inspira, and the recruitment process led by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (Senior Appointments) and administered by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.

85. As at 30 November 2016, a total of six staff members were under contract at the Institute in Geneva: the director, two senior research coordinators, one communications and outreach staff and two administrative and support staff. The Institute received support from Switzerland for an Expert position in gender (to July 2016) and from Germany for a Junior Professional Officer position on the social dimensions of climate change (2014-2017).

86. Institute projects are supported by junior researchers employed as consultants: in the period 2015-2016 there have been eight research analysts. In addition, four consultants supported communications activities. The Institute also benefited from the support of 18 interns during this period, and hosted 9 visiting research fellows.

87. In the course of 2016, it has become imminent that the Institute decrease its expenditures, owing to lack of funding. Staff separations were made across the different functions (administration, communication and research) so as to retain baseline capacity in each. To that end, the contracts of two research coordinators, the associate editor and the director's personal assistant were not renewed.

B. Governance and Board

88. The Board of the Institute met in Geneva on 16 and 17 April 2015. The Board did not meet in 2016 owing to lack of funding; however, as part of its responsibilities, it approved the relevant documents on a "no objection" basis.

89. The composition of the Board changed during the reporting period. The terms of Bina Agarwal, Evelina Dagnino and Julia Szalai expired on 30 June 2015, after six years.

90. The first term of Maureen O'Neil (Chair), Huang Ping and Patricia Schulz expired on 30 June 2015; the term of Ms. O'Neil was extended by the Secretary-General for two years. The renominations of Mr. Ping and Ms. Schulz to 30 June 2017 were confirmed by the Economic and Social Council.

91. In view of the financial circumstances of the Institute and its reduced staff numbers, the Commission was requested to nominate one new member to the Board at its fifty-third session. Saraswathi Menon's (India) nomination (2015-2019) was confirmed by the Economic and Social Council at its thirty-second plenary meeting. As such, as at July 2015, the Board had eight nominated members and two seats were vacant.

C. Financial report

92. The Institute receives no money from the United Nations general budget and is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from Governments, research foundations, United Nations agencies and other institutions.

93. As at 30 November and with 2016 accounts still open, the total income of the Institute (excluding miscellaneous income) for the period 2015-2016 was estimated at $5.068 million (see table). Estimated total expenditures are $5.620 million.

94. Institutional (non-earmarked) funding is estimated at $4.391 million, of which $400,000 are from Finland, $2.720 million are from Sweden and $1.261 million are from Switzerland (see table).

95. The Institute is currently dependent on two principal funders — the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and Switzerland (the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) — for financing institutional costs and key research, communications and impact activities.

96. The two-year extension (2015-2016) of the multi-year funding agreement with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency expires at the end of 2016. The three-year agreement with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2014-2016) also expires at the end of 2016.

97. At the time of writing, renewal of these agreements is under consideration, as is a multi-year agreement with Finland (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health) and Switzerland (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Such multi-year agreements ensure predictable funding flows and underpin the future stability of the Institute.

98. Earmarked (project) funding is estimated at $676,703. Finland (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) provided support for work on the Institute's "Linking social protection and human rights" activity. Other funds were provided by the United Nations Development Programme, the Ministry of Health of Brazil, several other United Nations agencies, foundations and non-governmental organizations (see table).

99. Important contributions not reflected in the table came from the Government of Germany (a Junior Professional Officer, 2014-2017), the Government of Switzerland (a seconded gender Expert, to July 2016), and the United Nations Office at Geneva (office space and programme support).

Funding sources, 2015-2016*

(United States dollars)

Donor	
Countries	
Brazil, Ministry of Health/Hospital do Coração	65 000
Finland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	109 623
Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	400 000
Sweden, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	2 720 277
Switzerland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	396 292
Switzerland, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	864 882
United Kingdom, Department for International Development	21 148
United Nations agencies	
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	75 000
International Labour Organization	12 312
United Nations Development Programme	170 000
United Nations Environment Programme	10 000
Research foundations and other funders	
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung	20 033
Ford Foundation	71 290
The Graduate Institute	20 774
National Center for Social Studies	15 000
University of Bern	72 523
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies	24 000
Total	**5 068 154**

* Estimates as at 30 November 2016, excluding miscellaneous income and in-kind contributions.